YOUR GRAFTING PROGRAM SHOULD BE UNDER WAY, IF BLOOMING PLANTS ARE DESIRED BY EARLY SUMMER. EVEN TENDER SCION WOOD WILL TAKE NOW.

A THOROUGH SPRAY APPLICATION NOW, WHEN FOLIAGE IS THIN, WILL BE MOST EFFECTIVE IN SCALE CONTROL. REMEMBER TO WITHHOLD OIL EMULSION TYPES OF SPRAY UNTIL ALL DANGER OF FROST IS PAST.

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GENERAL SPRING MANAGEMENT OF HIBISCUS BELOW THE 27TH PARALLEL

W. BRUCE PARNELL

THE GROWING AND CARE OF HIBISCUS PLANTS IN TROPICAL FLORIDA DIFFERS SLIGHTLY FROM THAT OF THE CENTRAL AND NORTHERN PART OF THE STATE, WHERE THEY HAVE AT TIMES, SOME FREEZING WEATHER DURING THE WINTER MONTHS. VERY SELDOM DO WE EXPERIENCE FREEZING WEATHER, SO WE THEREFORE TREAT OUR PLANTS JUST A LITTLE DIFFERENT DURING COOL WEATHER. THE WINTER IS OVER, SO THIS ITEM WILL HAVE TO DO WITH THE TREATMENT THIS COMING SPRING.

FIRST, AT THE BEGINNING OF OUR SPRING, SOME OWNERS OF HIBISCUS GARDENS GIVE AN APPLICATION OF EITHER COMMERCIAL FERTILIZER 4-7-5; 6-6-6; 4-8-4; 5-10-5 OR SOMETHING HIGHER IN POTASSIUM FOR EARLY PRODUCTION OF FLOWERS. I USUALLY START OFF WITH AN APPLICATION OF 4-7-5 WITH 20% ORGANIC FERTILIZER, THAT WOULD BE THE FIRST OF MARCH AS A RULE. THEN CONTINUE EVERY OTHER MONTH WITH THIS OR PROBABLY SOME 6-6-6, ALTERNATING WITH A NUTRITIONAL SPRAY, HIGH IN COPPER, FOR THE PREVENTION OF FUNGUS, LATER ON IN THE SUMMER. DIFFERENT SIZE AND AGE PLANTS OF COURSE TAKE DIFFERENT SIZE APPLICATIONS, HOWEVER, ON A MEDIUM SIZE PLANT ONE OR TWO YEARS OLD, TWO TO FOUR HANDFULS AT ONE APPLICATION; SPRINKLE AROUND PLANT AWAY FROM MAIN TRUNK, AND SCRATCH IN, THEN WATER DOWN. TRY TO KEEP WATER AND FERTILIZER OFF THE FOLIAGE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.

IF YOU DO ANY PRUNING, SOME SHOULD BE DONE IN JULY, SOME LATER ON IN THE FALL - I DO NOT PRUNE ONLY TO GET SCION WOOD FOR GRAFTING. AS SOON AS THE PLANTS START TO SHOW NEW GROWTH, WATCH FOR PESTS - ABOUT THE FIRST ONES ARE APHIDS. THEY WILL ATTACK THE NEW GROWTH AND FLOWER BUDS, AND WILL STICK ON THERE UNLESS THEY ARE KILLED. THAT IS EASY, GIVE THEM SOME NICOTINE SPRAY. GET INFORMATION FROM YOUR SEED STORE. NEXT LOOK FOR LEAF-HOPPERS, THRIP, AND THE DIGNIFIED, STATELY, COLORFUL GRASS-HOPPER, AND THEN THE BRILLIANT GREEN FUZZY WORM. DON'T TOUCH HIM, HE WILL LEAVE HIS STING FOR A TIME - IF YOU ARE SMOKING WHEN ONE STINGS YOU, WET THE TOBACCO AND APPLY TO STING - IT WILL STOP IT ALMOST IMMEDIATELY. FOR ALL THESE PESTS, SEE YOUR SEED STORE MAN AND DO JUST WHAT HE TELLS YOU. HOWEVER, A WELL FERTILIZED, WELL KEPT PLANT, NOT POTTED, WILL BE ALMOST IMMUNE TO ALL INSECTS.

OUR SOIL IN THIS AREA IS SANDY AND FULL OF LIME. THE FACT THAT HIBISCUS WILL DO BETTER IN A SLIGHTLY ACID SOIL ANYWHERE, SOME GROWERS GIVE ONE OR TWO APPLICATIONS A YEAR OF GARDENIA-AZALEA COMMERCIAL FERTILIZER TO OVERCOME THE ALKALINITY AND RENDER A SLIGHTLY ACID pH. WRITE YOUR SEED POD EDITOR FOR ANY INFORMATION YOU WANT, LARGE OR SMALL, HE WILL GLADLY PUT YOU IN COMMUNICATION WITH THE AUTHORITY ON THE SUBJECT.

THIS PROCEDURE, IF FOLLOWED SHOULD NOT BE HARD TO DO; A LITTLE EXTRA WORK, A LITTLE COMMON SENSE, AND AN UNDERSTANDING OF WHY YOU ARE DOING WHAT, WILL REWARD YOU WITH FINE, SUBSTANTIAL BLUE RIBBON BLOOMS FOR EXHIBITION AND COMPETITION IN THE FAMED AMERI-